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Report on the "Automated Acquisitions: Managing Change" Preconference

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"Automated Acquisitions: Managing Change" was the theme of the preconference held July 7 and 8 at the New Orleans Marriott Hotel. The preconference was sponsored by the Library Administration and Management Association with the co-sponsorship of the Resources and Technical Services Division of ALA. The preconference planning committee included: David Bilyeu (Westmont College), Diane Cimbala (Faxon Company), Colleen Cook (Texas A&M University), Eugenia Harrell (Texas A&M University), James Mouw (University of Illinois, Chicago), Judith Paquette (University of California, Santa Cruz), Joseph Raker (Boston Public Library), Penny Schroeder (Northwestern University), Elizabeth Valadie (New Orleans Public Library), Raita Vilnins (Elmhurst Public Library, IL), and Linda Vertrees (Chicago Public Library). A faculty of 20 guided over 80 participants through the two-day session. Day One included three general sessions, two small group sessions, and a vendor exhibit and reception. Day Two included two general sessions and three small group sessions. Each small group session was repeated five times, allowing each preconference participant to attend all small group sessions.

GENERAL SESSION I

"THE STATE OF THE ART IN AUTOMATED ACQUISITIONS"

Robert Walton, Texas State Library, began his presentation with a discussion of the various levels of automated acquisitions systems. At the most basic level, the system must support the ordering and purchasing of materials. Virtually all available systems meet this basic level; it is at the second level that vendors begin to disappear. This second level includes: identification of specific bibliographic information, assistance in duplicate detection, order preparation, management of receipt, support for claiming/cancellation, invoicing and payment functions, and management information. Many systems are lost at the third level, which includes serials control, the accounting function, handling of gifts, and support of collection development.

Walton posed the question of what is the basic goal of an automated acquisitions system. He then cited a 1986 Richard Boss study for *Library Technology Reports* which identified two primary goals of automating acquisitions. The first was to contain or lower the costs of the

acquisitions process (often, the director's objective). The second goal was to control what happens in the acquisitions process, e.g., monitoring staff behavior, identifying of bottlenecks. Other studies identify two additional goals: supporting an interface between the acquisitions system and the online catalog, and supporting an interface between acquisitions and other functions such as the organization's parent accounting system.

Six available automation options were identified by Walton. These included in-house development, purchase of software which is run on existing computers, a turnkey integrated system, a jobber's online system, a subsystem of a bibliographic utility, and the development of one of the previous options which is interfaced with a library's other automated systems. Walton then focused on the constraints of the microcomputer-based systems available (over 30 systems available now). Microcomputer-based systems have a short life span, usually two to four years, because the technology used becomes obsolete quickly. Such systems are often costly due to the small size of the potential market. They often are less friendly (almost user hostile, Walton notes), providing little or no training and minimal documentation. Integration with these systems is difficult since they are usually not designed for use with local area networks.

In the selection process, librarians were cautioned not to overemphasize the functionality of the system. In addition to functionality, the selection process must evaluate performance issues such as response time, growth and space issues, procurement and installation issues, implementation issues such as database creation and training, and vendor viability. In the area of vendor viability, it does not matter how good the system is if the vendor does not survive or if the system is not supported. In addition, libraries need to be more diligent about non-bibliographic standards and a commitment to the Linked Systems Project. In closing, Walton made four comments which he identified as random musings. First, libraries must be prepared to change their procedures with the implementation of automation. Second, the acquisitions system is often the stepchild of the integrated system where the focus has been on circulation and the online catalog. Third, libraries have not developed the skills of library staff to completely utilize the functions of technology. Finally, libraries must be reasonable and realistic in their expectations.

GENERAL SESSION II

"BRINGING A SYSTEM INTO THE ORGANIZATION"

As moderator, Linda Vertrees, Chicago Public Library, asked the first speaker, Beverly Lynch, to address the issue of automated acquisitions in relation to the goals of the parent organization. Audrey Eaglen then responded with the acquisitions librarian's perspective.

I. Beverly Lynch, University of Illinois, Chicago

There are always two approaches to the automation of acquisitions: the director's long-term view and the acquisition's librarian's here-and-now view. Most librarians hold the basic assumption that libraries are rational places making rational decisions based on agreement on goals. Lynch cautioned librarians about making this assumption. For example, there is often disagreement of goals. Lynch asserted that the bottom line for every decision should be service to the client. It is imperative that everything be evaluated in that light. In addition, system decisions should also be evaluated in light of how each decision will affect the second or third system down the road.

Three irrational decisions which may prompt automation are that everyone else is

automating, that the faculty demands it, or that someone else decided it should be done. Instead, Lynch identified four important reasons to automate: service, better budget control, inventory control, and better utilization of staff. Economy is indeed a reason to automate. The acquisitions function is a very large business organization which must be economical and viewed as such from the outside.

Lynch closed with a scenario which James Mouw had posed for discussion. In this scenario, the faculty member searches the online catalog from his office computer. He identifies titles which the library does not own and transfers a request to purchase to the library bibliographer. The bibliographer transmits an order request to the Acquisition Department which places an order electronically with the appropriate vendor. The title is shipped, received, invoiced electronically, and cataloged to appear in the online catalog. The requestor is then notified electronically that the title is available. The technology to support this scenario already exists. The traditional lines between selection, searching, and ordering will continue to blur. Such an automated system could make some decisions itself. For example, when the number of holds on a title exceeds a particular level, review for additional purchase is triggered.

II. Audrey Eaglen, Cuyahoga County Public Library (OH)

Eaglen began her presentation with a history of the Cuyahoga County Public Library and its system. Cuyahoga County is one of the largest county systems in existence. Three-fourths of the \$4 million dollar materials budget is spent on books, with the remaining fourth spent on toys, AV, etc. It took eight years to make the system functional. In 1978, a commercial vendor was selected. After 2\ to 3 years of disaster, the library decided to design their own system. That system has now been functional for two years. In 1978, the department consisted of 33 employees; in 1988, it has 15 employees and 15 terminals. In 1978, there was a three to twelve month backlog in processing; in 1988, 92% of material purchased is on branch shelves within ten days.

Eaglen identified the following advantages to automating acquisitions: reduction of staff through attrition, daily order and receipt of material, daily shipment of material to branches, prompt payment to vendors, and decreased costs such as staff benefits. However, there are also disadvantages. Automation produces rising expectations from the public. Computers are expensive including the environmental costs to house them. Departments are at the mercy of phone lines and hardware, resulting in loss of productivity and morale problems if the system is unavailable for long periods of time. Employees may be resistant to change. On the other hand, once they learn something on the system, they often assume they know everything, which can result in major mistakes. Turf battles may arise within the library and the department. Increased use of computers increases the exposure to environmental and health hazards posed by equipment.

In closing, automation is here to stay and new applications can be found every day. The success of the Cuyahoga County automation project has resulted in a significant decrease in the error rate, the ability to do cost analysis, and the documentation of employee productivity.

GENERAL SESSION III

"MANAGING CHANGE: DEBUNKING THE MYTHS OF AUTOMATION"

Patricia Glass Schuman, Neal-Schuman Publishers, identified three myths of automation. The first prevailing myth is that automation saves money. There is no evidence that costs are lowered by automation. Instead, an obsessive focus on standards has occurred. Automation does

create new workflows but does not necessarily eliminate people from the process. In fact, successful systems depend on people. Automation usually means increased responsibility, and job redesign is a growing interest. Paraprofessionals represent two-thirds of a library's workforce. It is this staff which feels the greatest impact of automation resulting in an increase in volume and complexity. Unfortunately, there are no formal training programs for paraprofessionals. The support staff is most concerned about environmental/ergonomic factors and the perception that they are actually performing professional jobs. Sara Fine's research on resistance to automation indicates that 20% of professionals will resist. Schuman concludes that "people don't dislike change, *they* just don't want to be changed." Before leaving this myth, Schuman conceded that automation does not save money but the library may become more cost-effective.

The second myth states that automation will blur the lines between technical and public services. A recent ARL survey indicated that few actual reorganizations had occurred despite the prevalence of this myth. Schuman added that greater access to information across traditional organizational lines had occurred with integrated systems, but few reorganizations were happening.

The third myth indicates that automation will break down barriers between libraries. The philosophy of individual ownership versus universal access underlies this myth. Once again, Schuman found little evidence to support this myth. The concept of individual ownership versus universal access is beginning to change, but movement of resources between institutions has not increased significantly with the implementation of integrated systems. In closing, automation is not a panacea, only a means not an end.

GENERAL SESSION IV

"ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE AUTOMATED ENVIRONMENT"

Penny Schroeder, Northwestern University, served as moderator for this panel of three speakers. Each speaker represented a unique perspective on the subject of ethical considerations: Nolan Pope (librarian), Jane Burke (vendor of an automated system), and Susan Epstein (consultant).

I. Nolan Pope, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

A library's first responsibility in the automation process is to determine who is responsible for which activities. The library should be expected to have existing expertise and to understand systems in general. A vendor or consultant's information is only advice; the final decision rests with the library. Libraries need to have a sense of what the vendor expects from them. Appropriate information such as documentation of problems must be provided by the library to the vendor. The library must determine what training and documentation can be expected from the vendor. Most importantly, a library must understand what is adequate support to expect from the vendor. It is imperative that libraries be realistic in this area, weighing cost versus the service provided. It is the library's responsibility to establish good communication within the library, with the vendor, with the consultant, and with the systems group. A further responsibility is to ensure that information is disseminated appropriately.

Contracts are an essential element of the automation process. They define the expectations on both sides. The contract should be clear as to which elements of the system are available now and which are promised enhancements. The projected availability date for enhancements should

be included whenever possible. Pope stressed that a system should be purchased for what it is now, not what it *might* become.

II. Jane Burke, NOTIS Systems, Inc.

Jane Burke prefaced her remarks with the fact that librarians and vendors take it for granted that the library environment is very ethical. Because of this, basic ethical considerations such as kickbacks are not an issue. Therefore, her presentation focused on the important elements of the relationship between the library and the vendor. This relationship is long-term and constantly evolving. A library cannot simply change vendors when they become dissatisfied. The relationship is a continuing one. Systems take time to implement. The vendor is expected to provide training, documentation, and fine tuning. In addition, the vendors' experience with other libraries gives them valuable insights into workflow changes.

Burke next posed the question of why this relationship is of value to the vendor. The single most important factor for the vendor is the library's opinion of the vendor and the system. This opinion is more important than any advertising. Because this market operates in a reference-sale environment, positive user opinions are essential for success. Secondly, this market expects enhancements to the system to be provided. This is a highly unusual expectation in the general software market. Due to this expectation, the value of the relationship between the library and the vendor is enhanced.

In closing, Burke addressed two other ethical considerations. Libraries have the right to include everything they want in their RFP and then shop for the best combination. However, even after the system is implemented, libraries should continue to ask for the enhancements they want. Both sides should be able to expect honesty in this process. Secondly, the vendor has the right to continue to exist to serve us. This includes the right to make a profit and to charge for services. It is often difficult for libraries to determine how they are being charged. Practice varies widely and charges are often included in hardware costs or maintenance fees. Nevertheless, these charges protect the viability of the vendor.

III. Susan Epstein, Susan Epstein Associates

Two areas of concern were identified for comment. The first, conflict of interest, can be identified in several ways. Obviously, if money changes hands, it is illegal. However, in the library environment, there are gray areas, such as requests to sponsor events such as a library opening. Inadvertent information-dropping must also be avoided. Such information may color the responses to bids that are received. Consultants should be questioned about their biases regarding particular systems. These biases may be justified, but the library has a right to an explanation. It is also fair for the library to ask if the consultant has ever worked for a vendor.

The second area of concern is that all parties must operate with openness and honesty. It is fair for vendors to know a library's plans and intentions. For example, do not send an RFP with a short time frame without contacting each vendor in advance to forewarn them. How open is the bid? Is it really a disguised sole source bid? Has almost everyone been eliminated by the mandatory requirements? It is unfair to vendors to request an RFP response if no money is available for the system. For example, if all that is needed are figures for a grant proposal, do not mislead the vendors by issuing an RFP. In short, state what is really needed and how the responses will be evaluated. When system demonstrations are arranged, it is the library's responsibility to be prepared to talk to the vendors. In addition, the vendor should be advised of the intended audience and what the library is trying to achieve with the demonstration. The library must keep *each*

vendor appraised of the library's progress. For example, the vendors should be told if the project or decision has been delayed or if a particular vendor has been eliminated and why if possible. It is unethical to play one vendor against another unless there are legitimate differences. All communication with vendors during the bid process should be coordinated through a single library spokesperson. Regardless of the outcome of the bid, librarians must remember that vendors may have provided proprietary information in the bid process which must be kept confidential.

GENERAL SESSION V

"THE FUTURE OF AUTOMATION FOR ACQUISITIONS"

After many years of experience with automated acquisitions, Richard Boss, Information Systems Consultants, is beginning to believe that the ideal system can happen. Boss identified five trends which are coming to fruition to make this ideal system operational. First, the concept of full integration will have arrived in all systems by mid-1989. Full integration means that the four modules of an integrated system—Acquisitions, Circulation, Online Catalog, and Serials—share a common database with a single command structure for all modules. Single keystrokes enable library staff to move records from module to module. Although few libraries are large enough to effect cost savings from automation, automation is incredibly service-effective for any size library.

Interfaces to resource databases was the second trend identified by Boss. This already exists to varying degrees, but full use will occur 2 to 3 years in the future. The first generation of these interfaces was tape-loading which was slow, labor-intensive, and not as timely. The second generation interface involved terminal-to-computer linkages, such as downloading OCLC records to a local system. The third generation—computer to computer—is an expensive option but one that will be facilitated by the Linked Systems Project. With this model, each system would conform to standards which would allow it to output and receive data in a standard format. The majority of the turnkey system vendors have contractually agreed to support the OSI concept. However, the support for the model is for resource sharing, not to encourage hybrid systems. The advantages to the acquisition process for interfaces with resource databases include elimination of the need to rekey data located in other sources and the subsequent decrease in error rates.

Interfaces to vendors' systems and interfaces to business office systems are increasing. Tape transfers of bibliographic and invoicing information from vendors are fairly common. Interfaces which allow electronic transmission of orders and claims are also improving. Such electronic interfaces are appearing but slowly. Interfaces with business office systems, i.e., the organization's parent accounting body, have proceeded slowly due to a concern about confidentiality.

The final trend — optical scanning technology—is very common outside the U.S., and prospects for the U.S. look very promising. Technologies, such as CD-ROM, allow the library in-house access rather than remote access. The single greatest drawback to CD-ROMs at present is that they are usually single-user systems. An even more promising development in this area is the SISAC barcode which is under development. This technology identifies journal issues by encoding unique identifying information on the barcode. Scanning the piece with wand attached to the automated system identifies the issue and checks it in. This trend along with the four mentioned earlier are in the later stages of development and are routinely appearing in automation bids and contracts.

Boss concluded his presentation with an analysis of the ideal system he envisioned in his

book, *Automating Library Acquisitions* published in 1982. The majority of his specifications either already exist or nothing technological prevents them from existing.

GROUP SESSIONS

Topic 1: "The Acquisitions Manager's Role in Needs Analysis, Selection, and Acquisition"

John Corbin, North Texas State University, identified two factors which influence the acquisitions manager's role. The first factor is whether the acquisitions system is a stand-alone system or a component of an integrated library system. The second factor is whether there is a systems or automation librarian in the library. The library environment in regard to these two elements will influence the acquisitions manager's role.

Corbin then listed six potential roles for the manager in needs analysis, selection, and acquisition. The primary role is that of planner. Good planning increases the chances of success for any project. Planning responsibilities include development of goals, identification of constraints, development of a strategy for implementation, determination of who is responsible for completing each segment, and establishment of controls to assess progress. The second role, that of an involver, compels the manager to share the planning responsibility. Such a project should not be undertaken alone. Involvement of staff often leads to greater acceptance of a system. For example, staff can be assigned to task forces which work on specific components of the project. However, such task forces should be viewed as dealing with substantive issues, not simply as "busy work."

The third role is that of resource person. A key ingredient for success is information. The acquisitions manager should be the resource person in a number of areas, including local acquisitions policies and procedures, acquisitions policies and procedures in other libraries, the system procurement process, the automated acquisitions system marketplace, and automation and systems in general. The role of teacher takes the knowledge of the resource person and conveys it to the staff. To be an effective teacher, the manager must be willing, patient, calm, and a good communicator. As a coordinator, the manager will have to synchronize activities within the department with those outside. The key element here is to keep the systems librarian informed. The final role is one of leadership. In addition to the authority and influence that goes with the manager's job, the manager must be objective, decisive, unbiased, persuasive, and enthusiastic. In essence, the roles of an acquisitions manager in the automation process require a full range of managerial and interpersonal skills.

Topic 2: "The Acquisitions Manager's Role in Staff Motivation in an Automated Environment"

Pauline Iacano, Ramsey County Public Library (MN), introduced her topic with a discussion of the implementation of the Dynix System in her library. The online catalog was installed in January 1986. The library served as the Beta test site for the Acquisitions module in March 1987. Decisions were made at that time to reorganize technical services along format rather than function lines. Several original catalogers were moved to public service responsibilities. The library assistants were each given a type of material, such as adult, juvenile, or AV, to coordinate. The library assistants handled all facets of their particular format from ordering through processing. The staff was heavily involved in the transition and planning stages which greatly contributed to the success of the reorganization. The staff continues to meet weekly for problem solving and to set priorities for the department as a whole. Several additional benefits such as teambuilding and shared-problem resolution have occurred as well. Iacano identified three

benefits which have resulted from the reorganization. First, no backlogs exist. Second, each library assistant spends one day a week in public service in the branches. Third, people have more control over their own working life. In conclusion, Iacano noted six roles for the manager. The manager is an innovator, facilitator and cheerleader. In addition, the manager must evaluate the objectives of the department, create an environment for change, and convince staff that change will result in improvement.

Topic 3: "The Acquisitions Manager and the Systems Office, Understanding Duties and Building Relationships"

Terry Ryan, University of California, Los Angeles, provided her perspective as a systems librarian. First, she noted that any automation project requires that someone coordinate centrally a number of activities. These activities include coordination of training, documentation, hardware installation, communication with the vendor, and communication with the staff about enhancements. It is quite common for an existing person to take on these responsibilities in addition to regular assignments.

Ryan next focused on what the Systems Office needs from an acquisitions manager. First, a manager should look for ways to improve the system, being sure to make suggestions in a constructive manner. Ryan's Rules for Getting Action include: Be nice; Be realistic about time; State the problem, not the solution; Explain the importance of the request; and Rank requests. Second, the manager should look for new ways to use the system, but should be judicious in one's creativity. It is important for the manager to be open to changes in workflow or procedures without relinquishing one's role as a manager to the Systems Office. Finally, the manager is charged not only with keeping the staff informed and interested in the entire system but also with monitoring their enthusiasm.

Topic 4: "Organizational Considerations for the Acquisitions Librarian"

Suzanne Striedieck, Pennsylvania State University, introduced a model for the change process which included five elements: analysis, decision-making, consensus building, implementation, and troubleshooting. The ensuing discussion focused on the first two facets combined. The analysis/decision-making stage identified three phases which must be examined. Striedieck emphasized that the manager must look at what activities occur in the department before examining the organization. The first phase concerns service, or what the department does, such as ordering. In the second phase, operations, or how things are done, is examined. This involves an examination of workflows and procedures. Finally, the manager must look at the organizational structure.

In the area of service, the manager must explore what is done not only functionally but also behaviorally. Behavioral issues include such questions as whether the department emphasizes operations or analysis, initiates actions or simply reacts, and emphasizes efficiency or special services. The area of operations includes evaluation of environment, techniques, workflows, quality control, training, documentation, job assignment, standards, and management information. The analysis of the organizational structure incorporates the examination of many potential approaches, such as hierarchical or matrix.

Topic 5: "The Acquisitions Manager and Automated Fund Accounting, Management, Information Systems, etc. How do I Make it Work for Me?"

Joseph Raker, Boston Public Library, began the discussion with an examination of the

elements of fund accounting in an automated acquisitions system. Those elements are online financial reports for each fund, online transfer of funds, flexibility of financial reports, and invoice/check tracking. Raker then provided a brief summary of the Boston Public Library System, which was locally developed. Although the system permits the online transfer of funds, it maintains no history of these transfers. The tier system of reporting permits a great deal of flexibility in the financial reports. Forthcoming improvements to the system were noted, including a journal transfer history file, collection development reports, and integration with the city accounting system.

Linda Vertrees, Chicago Public Library, opened her portion of the session with a discussion of the BATAB system in operation at the Chicago Public Library (CPL). BATAB has been using Version 4 of the system since 1979. Vertrees also briefly explained the organization at CPL, since it varies from many other public libraries. Divisions are given fund allocations for which they are given responsibility to manage. The Acquisition Department advises, consults, and encourages those divisions with allocations. The library maintains no approval plans or selection lists. The BATAB system provides management reports such as open order and fund status reports which are the tools used to manage the system. The primary disadvantage to the BATAB system is that it is not online and, consequently, management reports are out-of-date as soon as they arrive.

Vertrees concluded with the items she would look for in a new system. These include online access to information, the ability to trace a format of material, flexibility for change, and enhanced vendor performance monitoring.